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ABSTRACT

As a co-author of the GEAR-UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) grant proposal to the Department of Education in 1999, the primary author (Kohl) of this paper is in her third year of working at Franklin Middle School, which largely serves at-risk minority students through the University of South Florida (USF), which is the grant recipient. The paper first describes Franklin Middle School and its educational community and gives the purposes of the visual literacy component in the language arts curriculum in a school with students whose literacy skills are not first-rate. It lists the books and articles used to provide a rationale for the visual literacy component, stating that the potential for utilizing films to unite thematic houses can be seen, as can the utilization of films as literature. The second author (Dressler) discusses student and teacher responses to the visual literacy component in the language arts curriculum. The third author (Hoback) describes his students' use of film. They first read S. E. Hinton's "The Outsiders," then watched Francis Ford Coppola's "The Outsiders" and worked on an assignment which examined the film's deviations from the book's text. The paper's primary author concludes that overall the visual literacy insertion was a successful introduction to both film rhetoric and media devices while simultaneously meeting the Sunshine State Standards and preparing students for high-stakes testing. (Contains 10 references.) (NKA)

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The Roles of a Visual Literacy Component in Middle School Language Arts Curricula: A Case Study With At-Risk Students and Their Teachers.

By Virginia Kohl, Becky Dressler, and John Hoback

Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Communication Association (87th, Atlanta, GA, November 1-4, 2001)

V. Kohl

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The Roles of a Visual Literacy Component in Middle School Language Arts Curricula: A Case Study With At-Risk Students and Their Teachers

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Background Information

Since the submission of my abstract for this presentation, I have changed "role" within the title to "roles." Last year, the insertion of a visual and film literacy component was intended to encourage interdisciplinary planning among teachers for elevated student literacy across the areas of language arts, math and science *or* social studies within thematic house structures of Fine Arts, Technology, and Environmental Studies. The objective then was to unify the disciplines through a common focal point—films—that were pertinent to the houses' themes. Teachers of electives, who could have provided direction for interdisciplinary planning, had a different planning period than the grade level teachers of core classes.

The administration at Franklin Middle School abandoned thematic house structures beginning this academic year for three primary reasons: (1) The teacher who taught agriscience as the elective course that placed students taking her course in the Environmental Studies House did not return (and a replacement for her was not available), (2) the Hillsborough County School District adopted the Whole School Effectiveness Model with emphases on "school culture" and "accountability measures" for all its schools, and (3) state-wide high stakes testing in reading, math and writing—high stakes to the extent that students failing to pass the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) in tenth grade will not receive a high school diploma unless

they manage to pass in five additional attempts, when the passing score becomes successively higher with each attempt. In the Tampa Bay area alone, the *St. Petersburg Times* reported (October 3, 2001) that 5,340 students failed the reading portion of the FCAT last year as tenth graders. Consequently this year, in lieu of working with teams of teachers in thematic houses, I work in concert with a reading specialist trained in Accelerated Literacy Learning (ALL) strategies with language arts teachers; my role is to provide innovative classroom activities as related to Sunshine State Standards, meeting FCAT benchmarks across the four "strands" of language arts: (1) language, (2) reading, (3) writing, and (4) listening, viewing and speaking. This year, the eighth grade students viewed Francis Ford Coppola's film version of *The Outsiders* after reading the novel by S. E. Hinton.

Franklin Middle School

As a co-author of the GEAR-UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) grant proposal to the Department of Education in 1999, I am in my third year of working at Franklin Middle School through the University of South Florida (USF), which is the grant recipient. Franklin largely serves at-risk minority students: All students qualify for free or reduced price lunch; over 60% are African-American and nearly 20% are Hispanic; over 33% are in ESE (exceptional student education) classes, and 15% are enrolled in ESOL classes.

The school operates on a 4 X 4 block schedule, with students taking math and language arts all year, semester-long electives, and social studies one semester and science the other. Only in science, social studies and elective classes is the 4 X 4 block

"accelerated." Students spend twice the time in language arts and math classes than do students in other middle schools not on block scheduling; essentially, half of their time spent is in remediation. Regardless, almost 70% of Franklin students fall two or more grade levels behind in reading, and 49% perform at FCAT Level 2, as having "limited success" in reading. Yet, attempts toward remediation have been hurled at these students since third grade when they hadn't proficiently learned to read, nor had adequately learned their multiplication tables. It seems obvious to me, at this stage in their development as adolescents, they need *a reason* to actively engage in remedial activities that will allow them fuller participation as adults in society.

Purposes of the Visual Literacy Component

Middle school students that can't read on grade level are denied the benefits inherent in reading the best of adolescent fiction, which—unlike the black-and-white portrayals in elementary school stories—introduces them to the "gray" areas of human experience. Not only is literature a gateway to developing empathy (Hayakawa, 1978), it is "equipment for living," (Burke, 1973, pp. 293-304) in giving life meaning and purpose. Many of the books listed for middle school reading are available through university media libraries and in video stores. Class viewing of films enables teachers to introduce elements of drama and literary devices through a medium accessible to all students, while at the same time exposing students to characters worthy of consideration toward the end of developing empathy (Gozzi and Haynes, 1992).

Significantly, all students can participate *and* learn literary grade-level skills at the same time (Foster, 1979; Ong, 1982; Lee, 1993). Constructive participation is important:

Both Kenneth Burke (1984, pp. 235 & 266) and Martin Buber (1965, p. 121) assessed "participation" as the one defining trait of being human; Irving Goffman (1961a, pp. 248-54) wrote of "deviance" as a form of participation when traditional routes are denied.

Rationale for the Visual Literacy Component

The textbook used in language arts classes is *Elements of Literature,* published by Holt, Rinehart and Winston. In both the seventh and eighth grade texts, there are units entitled "The Elements of Drama," wherein seventh graders study a teleplay and eighth graders study a play and a screenplay.

From this inclusion to the curriculum, I was reminded of two books published by the National Council of English Teachers I'd read that promoted the use of film in classrooms, as well as a journal and magazine article. One of the books was Carol D. Lee's *Signifying as a Scaffold for Literary Interpretation: The Pedagogical Implications of an African American Discourse Genre.* In addition to her references to recognizing "interpretive communities" (Stanley Fish) and the importance of "speakerly texts" (Henry Louis Gates) for students brought up in a strong oral culture, Lee partly taught her students interpretive skills through watching *The Color Purple.* She envisioned optimal school learning occurring through "semiotic mediation in a zone of proximal development" (Vygotsky and Wertsch), where the role of the teacher is to provide semiotic mediation.

The other book was Harold M. Foster's *The New Literacy: The Language of Film and Television.* Written in 1979, Foster was largely responding to the amount of time teenagers watch films and television without any instruction regarding the employment of

media devices—thereby making it difficult for them to adequately distinguish between reality and the persuasive pseudo-reality of the visual media. He wrote, "Since film and television obviously are here to stay, schools should accept the responsibility of training literate and perceptive viewers– just as they have always accepted the responsibility for the teaching of reading and writing. The instruction of this new literacy naturally becomes the province of the teachers of English, because the core of all literacy is the effort to communicate" (p. 31).

Articles included "In Praise of Illiteracy" (Enzensberger, 2000) and George H. Mead's "The Nature of Aesthetic Experience" (1925-26). Hans Enzensberger concludes his essay with, "Literature will continue to thrive as long as it commands a certain agility, a certain cunning, a capacity for concentration, and a good memory. As you recall, these are the features of the true illiterate. Perhaps he will have the last word, since he requires no other media than a voice and an ear" (Harper's, p. 30). This sentiment was reminiscent of Gozzi and Haynes' (1992) in *Electric Media and Electric Epistemology: Empathy at a Distance,* when they suggested that the electric media was invoking "emotionality, in the manner of the oral epistemology" (CSMC, p. 218).

Similarly, Mead wrote of the need for aesthetic experience three quarters of a century ago—sounding much like Marx as he wrote of the effects of industrialization on separating a person's work from his art. His antidote was engagement in "reverie," which provides a forum for people to be in touch with their emotions—a necessity for identification, empathy and dialogue. Mead wrote of movies:

> For while the reverie provides us with the imagery of common values, the common consummatory experiences, it provides us also with the

> compensations for our defeats, our inferiorities, and our unconfessed failures. And what the average film brings to light is that the unsatisfied longings of the average man and woman are very immediate, rather simple, and fairly primitive [...] Whether or not the escape reaction is a dominant interest in the movie public in determining the type of film, there is a vast number of them that do not answer to that motive. Some of them appeal simply to interest in a story vividly told in pictures, to a sympathetic love of adventure, and to the response to beauty in nature and to delight in picturesque and distant scenes. One captures something of the same values that he seizes in travel and adventurous outings. A genuine aesthetic effect is produced if the pleasure in that which is seen serves to bring out the values of the life that one lives. (pp. 391-393)

Having taken two graduate-level courses in film—"Rogue Filmmakers" through the English Department that emphasized the media devices Foster wrote of, and "Film Rhetoric" in the Communication Department that emphasized what a film is actually saying—I first saw the potential in utilizing films to unite thematic houses before necessarily having to revision their utilization as literature.

Films As Unifiers of Thematic Houses

One of the reasons for the popularity of thematic houses within middle schools is that the structure makes the transitional experience from elementary to high school more intimate, particularly when the school also operates on the 4 X 4 Copernican Block:

Students leaving one or two teachers from elementary schools are greeted by a team of four teachers in middle school, who ideally engage in interdisciplinary planning that is based upon students' interests as reflected in their choice of an elective course.

However, when the elective teacher is not a part of the planning team, it can be difficult for the other three teachers on the team—consisting of a language arts, math and science *or* social studies teacher each semester—to complement the theme without reliance upon relevant fieldtrips, quotes for the week, and/or films to bridge the gap so that they have something in common to talk with their classes about after interdisciplinary planning.

In conjunction with helping teachers identify films for their thematic houses, I shared activities with them as recommended in Foster's book, *The New Literacy,* as well as some of my own. For example, he suggested a "Stories from Pictures" activity as an exercise in perception: "Students should learn that pictures, like words, contain meaning and ideas, and they should gain insight into the techniques of editing and composition. Students will be able to create a short story using photographs from a random group of pictures" (pp. 39-40).

After collecting and laminating color pictures (the librarian at Franklin laminated the pictures free of charge)—categorized as landscapes, "interiorscapes," individuals, people interacting, and animals, students were asked to place the random pictures in a sequential order that made sense to them and write a story. In addition to Foster's stated objectives listed above, students necessarily had to return to the oral tradition of storytelling, provoked by visuals, and "learn" the elements of drama, sequencing and

prediction in order to write their stories. In groups of three, the students wrote varied and creative stories—ranging from a diary to science fiction.

Although Foster didn't include the following activity in his roster, I also photocopied and laminated magazine advertisements for the purpose of introducing the persuasive elements in some of the media devices he brought into question. My suggestion to the teachers was that they use this assortment as writing prompts for "FCAT Writes" because their students are asked, in this high stakes test, to either provide an expository or persuasive writing sample. This exercise enables students to both see the persuasive elements of the media and write about them in exposition *and* learn the strategies of persuasion at the same time.

Foster did write about the selection of films; however at the time of his writing the process wasn't as perplexing as it is today, particularly in terms of teacher concerns regarding copyright law as pertaining to the viewing of films in classrooms. I consulted a media librarian at USF, who shared this information:

> When we order videos, we try to avoid "home use" only stipulations. However, showing videos in face-to-face classroom instruction falls under the "Fair Use Guidelines" for copyright exception. We do not purposely purchase full public performance rights, as would be necessary if you were showing videos to open invitation groups, paying audiences, etc. I've also noticed that a lot of the videos purchased from some of the larger educational distributors now come with public performance rights included (although they at times stipulate "no charge for viewing"). These are companies such as PBS and Films for the Humanities and Sciences.

Some online sights you may want to consult include:

www.cetus.org/fairindex.html, and

www.utsystem.edu/OGC/IntellectualProperty/cprtindx.htm#top (Herbert, in an email dated May 15, 2001).

Despite teacher concerns pertinent to the viewing of films in their classrooms—primarily because many selected were already contained within the film library at the school—we managed to make a number of selections that were relevant to the thematic houses to which they and their students belonged. Some of the most successful from the school library in unifying thematic houses were *Brother Future* (viewed in the eighth grade Fine Arts House); *A Cry in the Wild* (the film rendition of *Hatchet,* viewed by the seventh grade Environmental Studies House), and *Konrad* (viewed in the seventh grade Technology House). Other successful units included the Blockbuster hits of *Bicentennial Man* (viewed by the eighth grade Technology House); *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* (viewed by the seventh grade Fine Arts House), and *The Perfect Storm* (viewed by the eighth grade Environmental Studies House).

The science or social studies teachers on each team were largely instrumental in selection of the films, as language arts teachers were somewhat more flexible in terms of Hillsborough County's "scope and sequence" of/for instruction within the district. Math and elective teachers were informed of the selections and were given an opportunity to participate: Math teachers could either incorporate word problems associated with the films in using characters' names and their possible dilemmas, or have their students draw related time lines; in some cases, they could engage their students in creative, three-

dimensional activities. Likewise, elective teachers were kept abreast of the films their students were viewing in a core class and could tap into relevant activities.

When I mentioned "successful" units earlier, I was defining success in terms of student reflection and teacher report. Particularly from *Bicentennial Man,* students seemed to grasp what it meant to a robot named "Andrew" to be human. Here are some excerpts from their essays: "In the movie, he said that it wasn't fair that he couldn't cry and they [humans] could. Whenever he was sad, he had no way to let it out. He also wanted to die like everyone else; he was wondering why everyone couldn't live like him forever. I wouldn't blame him. I know I wouldn't want to live forever and experience the pain of loved ones dying over and over again […] Think about it. Would you want to be put through all of this agony of death or the anger of losing your love because you are not human? I wouldn't. Think about it—living with no feeling, taste or touch." Another student wrote, "Andrew wanted to live his life as a human and die as a human. Andrew wanted to become human so he could die because everyone he loved died except him. Because he didn't age, he was immortal. Andrew lived for 200 years. He married Porcia and was declared the oldest person to ever live. When Andrew died, he had accomplished everything he set out to do." For me, these particular students had developed a keen sense of empathy. Their teachers, across the houses, mostly reported that their students had expressed gratitude that their studies were linked—that each teacher knew what the others were doing.

Films as Literature

GEAR UP staff works with eighth graders, their teachers and parents this year at Franklin, and ninth graders at primarily Blake High School because the program follows two cohorts of students through their senior years in high school. Eighth graders read *The Outsiders* in the fall, and *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl* in the spring. The co-authors of this paper are eighth grade language arts teachers with whom I worked last year when thematic houses constituted the underlying structure of the school. With this year's emphases on reading, FCAT preparation and the Whole School Effectiveness Model, we are fortunate to have two reading specialists as part of the GEAR UP staff, who also work with the language arts teachers and their students.

Not only is *The Outsiders* exemplary as outstanding adolescent fiction, the film is equally so in the way Coppola preserves Hinton's writing. From both sources, students are, indeed, introduced to the gray areas of life and living. Ponyboy Curtis is the narrator of the book and movie, and as a "greaser" is almost killed by a group of "Socs" (short for "socials") before his friend, Johnny, kills the leader of the group in both self defense and defense of Pony. Pony and Johnny, along with Dally, the toughest of the "greasers" who assisted them in running away, become overnight heroes by rescuing young children from their burning hideout in an abandoned church. Johnny later dies from the injuries he sustained during the rescue. Although Hinton and Coppola highlight different aspects of the story, both construed themes are remarkable: Hinton emphasizes dialogues conveying that greasers and Socs aren't really different because of their social status but because of who the individuals are, while Coppola emphasizes the importance of staying "gold"—based upon a Robert Frost poem that Pony recites to Johnny upon witnessing a

morning dawn. Both messages are valuable for "at-risk" students who may view themselves as "outsiders."

In order to best assist myself, the reading specialists and the teachers for viewing the film with the eighth graders, I provided "Monarch" or "Cliff" note summations of the reading along with FCAT overlays of suggested activities. One of the most well received activities was the "Draw-A-Person Report" that met the objectives of Sunshine State Standards to "understand character and plot development and how point of view and tone influence the story line," and to "take notes and summarize." I recommended that students summarize each chapter with this report, focusing on Pony, because he's the narrator.

I was introduced to the "Draw-A-Person Report" from attending a full day reading workshop for middle school teachers a couple of years ago. A social studies teacher at the school had similarly been familiarized with the format and used it with her students. The "report" has students contemplate a stick figure, and answer these questions: Eyes, what was his/her vision? Brain, what did he/she think? Mouth, what did he/she say? Shoulder, what are his/her strengths? Heart, what did this person feel? Hands, what did this person do? Achilles tendon, what are this person's weaknesses? The road, what is the timeline of this person's life in terms of the story? Having answered these questions in sentence fragments enables students to write a narrative summation.

One of the four language arts strands within the Sunshine State Standards that is particularly relevant to film viewing is "Strand C: Listening, Viewing, Speaking." Another is "Strand D: Language." After previewing the film and taking notes on its

sequence and time frame in relation to the book's chapters, I contemplated relevant activities to the Sunshine State Standards for FCAT testing. I also audio taped the movie for classroom reference because Coppola remained true in his film rendition to Hinton's words.

Some of the "Strand C" benchmarks I identified as pertinent to visual/film literacy were: "Student acknowledges feelings and messages in a conversation through verbal and non-verbal cues;" "student uses listening skills to ask questions for elaboration and clarification, summarizes main points and supporting details orally or in writing;" student determines main concept, supporting details [...] and persuasive techniques in a non-print message;" "student responds to techniques and cues in a non-print message;" "student uses movement, gestures, silent periods and facial expressions to convey meaning to an audience" (I suggested that students enact their favorite monologue from the book after viewing the film), and in conjunction with the lattermost, "student understands how volume, stress, pacing and pronunciation can positively or negatively affect an oral presentation."

"Stand D" requires that "students understand how the multiple media tools of graphics, pictures, color, motion, and music can enhance communication in television, film, radio and advertising," and that "students know how mood or meaning is conveyed in poetry (word choice, sensory or figurative language, line length, punctuation, rhythm, etc.)." The former echoes Foster's concern, and the latter becomes relevant when considering Frost's poem in the book and Coppola's choice to have Stevie Wonder's song, "Stay Gold," precede and conclude his film. I copied the song lyrics for the teachers to share with their students as poetry to compare and contrast with Frost's poem.

Student and Teacher Responses to the Component

Becky Dressler

My students thoroughly enjoyed doing the "Draw a Person" report. Their observations of the characters were quite insightful. For Ponyboy's brain, some wrote, "he thinks that the Socs don't feel enough, while the Greasers feel too violently." Others chose "not using his head" as Ponyboy's Achilles tendon. For his heart students said, "he thinks that Darry doesn't love him; only Soda does." For his hand some wrote, " he likes to go to movies and take walks; walks give him a chance to think."

Students also worked in groups to write recipes for a Soc or a Greaser. For Socs, ingredients such as money, Mustangs, high quality girls, and being spoiled and privileged were used. One student said to mix the batter and then "stab holes in it like Johnny did Bob and fill the holes with Cherry Valance." For Greasers, students said to mix ingredients such as grease, knowledge, starch for sticking together, toughness, chocolate, switchblades, cigarettes, emotions, and decency. One group suggested refrigerating the dough " until it was as cold and hard as Dally." Ms. Naiman, the reading specialist from GEAR UP felt that students really showed their ability to analyze a character.

After watching the movie students compared it to the book. One student wrote that the movie gave him a better understanding of what the rumble was really like: "The movement was different from the book. They were all fighting at once and every time one boy hit another the sound made it sound real." This student also commented, "now I understand better why Darry always cared about what time Ponyboy came in the house. There was nothing but danger out there." Yet another student wrote about Dally's death: "In the book it just said that 'he pulled the heater [gun] out and the cops fired; he was

dead before he hit the ground.' In the movie he pulled it out and then you could hear the guns going off. Then he was crawling and calling Ponyboy's name after he got shot and then he died." One boy said, "the movie gave me a better understanding of Johnny and Ponyboy's friendship [through the actors' facial expressions]. When Johnny and Ponyboy were in the church, Ponyboy woke up and Johnny wasn't there. In his face you could tell he was worried for Johnny." Others wrote of their better understanding of Johnny's injuries from the fire and the fire itself. " In the book it seemed like a little piece of the church fell on Johnny. In the movie, just about the whole church fell down on Johnny. He began to scream ...he was fried crispy. You could see the fire in color and the movement of the flames. You could hear the children screaming." Students observed that in the movie Darry shoves Ponyboy instead of slapping him, the court hearing was left out, Ponyboy was not shown being jumped, and East side and West side were referred to as North and South. A number of students pointed out that the book had more detail and therefore, reading the book was better than watching the movie. Students arrived at similar themes for the book and the movie: "It's hard all over; it doesn't matter how you act or look—it's what's in the inside [that counts]; stay golden; cosmetically you're different, but your emotions, thoughts and feelings are all human; poverty and wealth aren't that far apart; and fighting solves nothing."

Students were also asked to focus on a scene from the book that became more powerful in the movie. One student wrote about Ponyboy being able to hear Johnny's voice in his head as he read the letter to Ponyboy and seeing Dally and Johnny's faces as the letter was read. Another described being able to see how gold the sun really was as Ponyboy recited "Nothing Gold Can Stay." Yet another discussed the rumble. "It was

dark and cold and rainy that showed this was the time for action." He noted "the moans of the people as they got punched, the sloshing of mud and rain, and the screams of the Greasers and Socs."

John Hoback

After reading S. E. Hinton's *The Outsiders* and participating in several writing FCAT writing activities and CRISS reading activities, my students watched Francis Ford Coppola's film, "The Outsiders." While watching the film, my students were instructed to note five areas where the movie made changes in the story they read as a novel. This assignment turned students into active watchers who scanned the screen for deviations from the text. In many cases, students filled sheets of paper, noting as many as 30 relevant differences.

The next day, students were asked to choose what they felt were the five most important changes. In this case, a change was "important" if it significantly changed the film's story from that of the book. For example, many students noted that in the movie, Socs have their territory on the south side of town and Greasers control turf on the north side. In the book, on the other hand, Socs are on the west side and Greasers are on the east side. When I asked them if this change was important (i.e. changed the story), they responded that it was not, since the town was still divided into two main areas.

Another change students noted had to do with the character, Sodapop. In the book, Sodapop once loved a horse named Mickey Mouse who was owned by a rich child who boarded the horse at a stable. Sodapop spent time at the stable and he and Mickey Mouse grew very close. When the horse was suddenly sold, he was terribly upset. In the

movie version, however, "Mickey Mouse" is a cartoon Sodapop enjoys watching. When I asked if this difference changed the story, one young lady explained that it did (and was therefore important) because the book's scene in which Soda loses Mickey Mouse the horse portrays Sodapop as a very sensitive, caring character who feels love very strongly, rather than a young man who likes watching cartoons.

Another important change students noted had to do with Ponyboy, the protagonist. In the novel, Ponyboy writes *The Outsiders* as an English assignment for Mr. Syme, his High School English teacher. In the movie, Ponyboy clearly writes the story, but the reason he does so is never explicitly stated. Students felt this difference was important because Ponyboy's need to accomplish a homework assignment seemed "real" to them, and compelling. As a class, we went over these changes and noted them on the board.

Finally, students chose one of these important differences and wrote an FCAT-style "Extended Response" in which they explained why the difference was important—particularly how it changed the film's story from that of the book. The paragraphs they wrote had to include details from the story that would support their point. This focus on differences between the film and book versions of the story helped to engage the students' interest and provoke thoughtful discussion of both pieces.

Conclusion

I participated in two of Becky's classes after her students had watched the film and were engaged in some of the follow up activities. As a teacher with 31 years of experience, she teaches the "honors" class as well as the two lowest groups of readers. In

one of the lower groups, she and I circulated and helped students write about their favorite scene from the movie that enhanced their understanding of the book. In terms of "communication needs of 'at-risk' students, I was reminded of how helpful it is to this population of students to be able to talk with a teacher about what they are writing while they are writing. For instance, one young woman was writing about the scene where Darry pushed Pony, but in reading what she had written I couldn't ascertain why she had chosen that scene. In talking with her, she told me that pushing Pony wasn't as bad as hitting him as Darry had in the book. Once she included how she felt about that in her paper, it was more evident why she had chosen the scene. Another example was in assisting a young man who had written the beginning of a wonderful paper but was stuck after he had written, "There are three reasons I chose this scene [the church fire]." I sat down behind him, asked him to put his pencil down and tell me the main reason. After he had, I said, "Okay. Write down what you just said to me while it's fresh in your mind." We progressed the same way until he completed his assignment.

The next activity was reading the lyrics of *Stay Gold* from the movie as poetry, and reviewing poetic devices of simile, metaphor, repetition, alliteration, rhythm and rhyme. From this exercise, students were able to understand that films have a definitive message, which can sometimes be gleaned from opening and closing songs. Finally, students were asked to divide into small groups, chose a scene from the book and determine who would play which character for a dramatic reading the next day using cues from the film.

I visited Becky's other low-level language arts class the next day and witnessed two of the dramatic readings. Nearly half of her students put themselves into their characters' roles with verve, expression, body language and appropriate intonation.

Overall, I think the visual literacy insertion was a successful introduction to both film rhetoric and media devices while simultaneously meeting the Sunshine State Standards and preparing students for high-stakes testing. As we become more attuned to the benchmarks, and more creative in ways of meeting the FCAT standards, viewing films may increasingly become an educational opportunity that is accessible for challenged readers.

Although neither Becky nor John could compare classroom test performance from this year's to last year's on *The Outsiders* because the county collects computerized data at the end of each school year, both teachers commented that their students' performance on the unit test was significantly higher this year: comprehension of the book was definitely enhanced by the insertion of the visual and film literacy component.

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